

Vignettes

#1

Samuel is a 16-year-old young man with a charge of simple assault on a school teacher, followed in quick succession by a few domestic violence charges against his guardian. He is already in a therapeutic school (the most intensive services in a school-based setting) and has an IEP for Emotional Disturbance. When you go to visit him, he is visibly angry every time you have seen him. As you are talking, the story gets around to, he “shouldn’t even be here”, “this is all his mother and stepfather’s fault”. He is fixated on his family even though he isn’t living with them and doesn’t see them. You go on to learn from his aunt who is his guardian that he was removed from the home of his mother and stepfather due to very severe allegations of abuse. The aunt doesn’t know what to do to help Samuel because his behavior is unpredictable, but she really wants to help him and is willing to listen to you. The judge is threatening to detain him. What would you do?

#2

Jamar is a 15-year-old young man. He picked up a sale case and the prosecutor agreed to divert the case to drug court. He was participating in drug treatment and doing well, when he was shot five times walking down the street. He luckily survived and finished his 9th grade year at home. He began carrying a gun everywhere he went and was arrested for aggravated assault at the beginning of the summer. At this point, he was kicked out of drug court, and thus had two pending cases. He went home on electronic monitoring. Shortly thereafter, his house was shot up, and he and his mom moved in with his grandma, a house where many of the local gang members hang out. While out on the band, he violated several times, going out of the house for short periods of time. He claims it’s because his grandma’s house is not safe, but you also know he is under investigation for a shooting that happened in the neighborhood. After multiple violations, the judge detained him and is unwilling to let him out -- both for the safety of the community and his own safety. He has a mentor who lives out of the neighborhood who is willing to take him in, but she is often at odds with his mother. Jamar is not willing to discuss the extent of his involvement in the streets, but he is self-medicating with pills and marijuana. What do you do?